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# THE JOURNAL OF KENKŌ

## *Musings of a Japanese Qoheleth in the Fourteenth Century*

P-63

# The Journal of Kenkō

*Musings of a Japanese Qoheleth in the Fourteenth Century*

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# THE JOURNAL OF KENKŌ

## *Musings of a Japanese Qoheleth in the Fourteenth Century*

O while away the idle hours, seated the livelong day before the inkslab, by jotting down without order or purpose whatever trifling thoughts pass through my mind, verily this is a queer and crazy thing to do!"

So begins a little book, translated for us by Mr. G. B. Sansom, known as the *Tsuredzure Gusa* of Yoshida no Kaneyoshi, the meditations of a Japanese recluse of the fourteenth century, or, as we might entitle it, the *Journal intime* of a Japanese Amiel.

Queer as Kaneyoshi (or Kenkō, to give him the Chinese form of his name), may have been, not least of all in his absolute disregard of literary fame (in which respect we may possibly even assign him Shakespeare for a companion), as to his being crazy there is so much philosophical method in his madness that the "trifling thoughts" he so modestly characterizes seem to the present

writer of sufficient interest to call for the attention of others beside the "small transfigured band" of students of Japanese literature. For my own part, I am glad to have found another out of the forgotten past upon whose grave the dust continues to heave, as in the case of Paracelsus and others, in token of a heart still beating beneath. Some Buddhist monks, we read, became mummies ere they died and as mummies remained in their monasteries. Kenkō, seen through the medium of his thoughts, must be regarded as one whose soul was ever fresh and young.

I have been moved to call Yoshida no Kaneyoshi a Qoheleth of the Far East from a certain mood which he shares with the Jewish writer of the Old Testament book called Ecclesiastes. Possibly the parallel is not a very exact one. There is in the Buddhist recluse an entire absence of the intense, mordant, almost fierce earnestness which is so characteristic of the Semitic mind. There is also a great deal more in Kenkō than the sense of the "weary weight of this unintelligible world," or even of the melancholy induced by the passing of the pleasure-freighted years. There is a gentle, ironic humor, a shrewd common sense, a naive delight in the simple sounds and sights and smells

of Nature, and much besides. Yet, in many and many a passage of the *Tsuredzure Gusa*, one is unfailingly reminded of the Jewish sage who, putting on the mask of the wise king Solomon, went on his solitary quest for the *Summum Bonum* and found all paths but one ending in the *cul-de-sac* of vanity.

Here are some sentences from the opening paragraphs:

"Lo, to those that are born into this world many indeed are the desirable things.

"Exceedingly worshipful is the majesty of the Mikado. The youngest leaves of the Bamboo Garden are not of the seed of men, and, such as they are, out of the reach of all human desires. Lofty the estate of the Prime Minister beyond all dispute, and those of such station as to have a retinue from the Court are of great splendor, while their children and their grandchildren, though their fortunes be decayed, still preserve some of the grandeur of their forbears.

"But in all ranks of life beneath these, though a man may rise and prosper and shew a boastful front, nevertheless, fine as he may think himself, it is forsooth but a sorry thing he has achieved."

Then he goes on, in words with which many a modern minister will sympathize, to describe the priest who if he is quiet and gentle is looked upon as a bit of stick, or if he is forward and aggressive is reminded that "thirst for fame means disregard of Shaka's law."

In the light of such words and many others to which allusion will be made later it is not difficult to recognize that the Jew and the Japanese were alike men of the world who had been taught by sad experience to feel the vanity of this world's fleeting show and to cry out from the depth of their disillusion for some light which would guide their feet into the paths of peace. To both alike a "Way" was revealed. To the Buddhist came as a genuine message of consolation the knowledge of the Eightfold Way of Gautama, and his glad city of peace, the *domus ultima,* was Nirvana. To the Jewish preacher the solution was found in a cheerful and dutiful service of Jehovah. In either case something was achieved to redeem life from the raven-croak "*Vanitas vanitatum.*" At any rate neither yielded to the temptation to quench desire in materialism.

In comparing Qoheleth with a literary product of the Far Orient it is worth referring to the ques-

tion, interesting if only as a speculation, as to the possible indebtedness of this Old Testament book to Buddhist sources. Dr. Dillon has made the assertion that Buddhism is the only religion "in which such practical fruits as we see exhibited in Qoheleth are manifested." The ancient world from the Yellow Sea to the Atlantic was much more closely knit, much more homogeneous, than at any time from the fifteenth to the middle of the nineteenth centuries. The great Chinese generals of the Han period, from two centuries B. C. to two centuries A. D., had brought the banners of the Middle Kingdom to the Caspian Sea face to face with the banners of Rome. In the first century A. D. the Indo-Scythian king, Kanishka, made himself the middle-man in that vast trade which engaged the silk and iron merchants of China and India and the business world of Greece and Rome. The coinage of this second Buddhist Constantine, with its Greek inscriptions, is represented in finds made in the extreme west of Europe. Along the great roads made for the marching of soldiers and the caravans of merchants the zeal of pilgrims and missionaries carried Buddhism easily from land to land. Several centuries before, King Açoka tells us in one of his

inscriptions that he had sent Buddhist missionaries to the courts of the Seleucidae at Antioch and to the court of the Ptolemies at Alexandria. It thus becomes very easy to conceive that by B. C. 205 the author of Ecclesiastes, who probably lived in Alexandria, had come face to face with Buddhist teaching. Sakhyan or Scythian soldiers, as full of ardor for Gautama as were the Christian soldiers in the Roman army for Christ, after the death of Alexander fought constantly in the armies of the Seleucids, and colonies of veterans were settled in many parts of the Roman Empire. One such colony settled at Beth-shan, on the borders of Samaria and Galilee, which was henceforth named Scythopolis, the city of the Sakhyans. Galilee, because of the intrusion of population from the further east, was known as "Galilee of the Gentiles," and all through Western Asia converts were made by missionaries like Dhamarakshita the Greek to the religion of Buddha.

All this will show the mechanical possibility of contact between the thought of the Jew and that of the Japanese. We can well allow a constant literary osmosis between East and West from very early times. Yet on the whole, the similarity of mood which distinguishes the two books to which

we have made reference must be regarded as more especially due to something more far-reaching than the possibility of mechanical contact. The spirit of man, east and west, is subject to the same "august anticipations, hopes and fears." Even the eager, material Occident will sometimes incline itself yearningly towards the pessimistic nihilism of the Buddha, just as the world-weary Oriental may in certain moods manifest a distinct sense of ownership in material concerns. It was surely no Buddhist recluse who wrote the *Ballade des Dames du Temps jadis*, and uttered the poignant cry:

*"Prince, n'enquérez de sepmaine*
*Où elles sont, ne de cest an,*
*Que ce refrain ne vous remaine;*
*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?"*

Nor, although the fashion has doubtless been catered to by publishers who could thereby produce a book meet to lay upon the American drawing-room table, is the popularity of Fitzgerald's *Rubaï'yat* of Omar Khayyam due solely to our joy in the wonderful verse of the translator.

But here again I must guard myself, lest it be thought that there is much in common between the pessimistic hedonism of the symposium of quat-

rain-writers whom it has pleased Fitzgerald to designate under the name of the Astronomer-poet of Nishapur and our sage of the hermitage of Yoshida.

Perhaps, before we go further, a few words may be useful to make clear to the reader the time, the place and the man.

The age—the fourteenth century of our era—has been well described by Professor Anesaki. It was distinctly a new era, as full of change in the eyes of old-fashioned people as the era of Meiji which has now passed into history. The time of the great Fujiwara supremacy was over, the Hōjōs had had their turn after the romantic days of Yoshitsune and Yoritomo, the great Mongol Armada of Kublai Khan had been triumphantly repelled, the long-continued dominance of the Ashikaga family was just beginning. It was an age of increasing wealth and luxury and of restless religious life. The ascendency of Shingon Buddhism was challenged by the rise of new prophets such as Honen, Shinran and Nichiren. In spite of the revivals associated with these and other names, it was a time of gloom, moral degeneration and social disintegration. As the Palestine under Persian dominion, to which

Qoheleth refers, was experiencing the miseries bred of luxury and tyranny, so Professor Anesaki speaks of the depressing circumstances of the Ashikaga epoch. He says: "The melancholy spirit of his time was a product of the conflict between, and at the same time a combination of, sentimentalism and indifferentism, the moods resulting from the degeneration of the Heian culture and caused by the conjoint force of the Zen and Taoism, respectively . . . . Human life has lost its light and hope, yet a full resignation was not possible. The air produced by these moods was something akin to the mentality in the last phase of Greek thought. Epicureanism was combined with Stoicism and men drank wine together with tears."

In many ways, of course, the writer of Ecclesiastes was facing new problems and was certainly no *laudator temporis acti.* Kenkō, on the other hand, was always harking back lovingly to the past. In this respect he stands in singular contrast to the great mass of his fellow-countrymen today. It is quite pathetic to notice the tenderness with which he dwells upon some ancient custom. There is to him no poetry like the old. "As for the verses of today" he says, "though there is an occasional

line which seems apt and graceful, there are none which conjure up a moving picture, beyond the mere words, as in the old poems." "Look how different," he says again, "are the verses composed by the ancients. What *they* wrote was simple and artless, pure in form and full of feeling." The new fashions are almost everywhere regrettable. The new head-dress is too high. "I have heard it said that people who own old hat-boxes use them nowadays with a new rim added." "In all things," he says elsewhere, "one looks back with regret to the past. Modern fashions appear to be growing from bad to worse. It is the ancient shapes that are most pleasing in the beautiful utensils made by workers in wood. As for the style of letters, even a scrap of waste paper from olden times is admirable. The everyday speech, too, is growing regrettably bad. Whereas they used to say *Kuruma motageyo* and *Hi kakageyo*, the modern people say *moteageyo* and *kakiageyo*." In this spirit he speaks of the old (and therefore correct) method of attaching cards to boxes, or of tying up scrolls, or of laying scrolls on the table. He is even concerned as to the correct manner of tying prisoners to the flogging-frame. "It is said that nowadays there is nobody who understands

the shape of this instrument, or the proper method of attachment." Kenkō is always pleased when he can give the authority for some ancient instance of the simple life with the words, "In those days it was like that." From the above details it may be readily gathered that even if we had no description of the Japanese recluse from the outside his notes would be by no means lacking in material for a biography. Happily, we can characterize him and sketch his career with the help of other sources than the *Tsuredzure Gusa*.

He was born in A. D. 1283, two years after the great victory which shattered the hopes of Kublai Khan and saved Nippon from invasion. His family was connected with the profession of divination and his father, Kaneaki, was guardian of the Imperial Shrine at Yoshida. As a young man Kenkō was attached to the court and, with eyes which were evidently wide-open, gained sufficient knowledge of the frailties and follies of men and women to sharpen his wit in the years that followed. He compiled poetry for the Emperor and simultaneously occupied the position of Vice-Master of the Horse. For the statement of the chronicler that he was an expert archer we are quite prepared, since he draws lessons not a few

in his Notes from this and other sports. One thinks at once of the striking passage in which he emphasizes the duty of keeping first things first: "A person learning archery takes in his hand both arrows. The teacher says: Beginners ought not to hold two arrows. They rely on their second arrow and are careless about the first. You ought each time to think, without any idea of missing and hitting, 'This is the shot which counts.'"

Archery was by no means the only sport with which he was familiar and from which he draws his illustrations. From football he enforces the warning that "mistakes always happen when an easy place is reached." "It is," he says, "when a difficult kick has been made and the next appears easy, that one is sure to miss." To the same end he speaks of how to teach the tree-climber. Not a word will he say to the climber when he is in the topmost branches, because then the man's own fear suggests caution. But, when he is getting down and not so very far from the ground, he calls out, "Come down carefully," because it is just then that mistakes happen through lack of care.

Again, it was at the horse-races of the Kamo Festival he learned a lesson as to the insecurity of

human life which he taught in the following striking words:

"Just at this time we saw a priest who had climbed up a tree over against us, and was seated in a fork to get a view. As he clung to his perch, time after time he dozed off, and only awoke when on the point of falling. The spectators jeered and reviled him, saying, 'What a fool the fellow is calmly to fall asleep up there in such a risky place.' When I heard this, I was struck with a thought, and exclaimed, 'And what of us, who spend the days in sight-seeing, forgetting that death may come at any moment? We are greater fools than he.' Whereupon those in front turned round, remarking, 'That is indeed so. It is exceedingly foolish,' and making way for us, they invited us to pass forward, saying, 'Come this way, sirs.' "

Time fails to speak of like moralizings drawn from the games of checkers, or shell-matching or backgammon. Perhaps it was out of the retrospect of many hours wasted in such occupations that in later life he made the reflection:

"This saying of a certain sage struck me as very fine and remained in my ears: 'I think it is a greater wickedness than even the four crimes and

the five offenses for a man to delight in spending day and night at games of checkers and back-gammon.' "

May there not be also in the reflection the consciousness of a skill no longer at the flood, as when Herbert Spencer remarked to the person who had beaten him at billiards, "Young man, you must have wasted many of your hours in acquiring such dexterity!"

The circumstances which led Kenkō to take the tonsure in 1324 are obscure. Very likely it was grief over some blow inflicted by death, as well as dissatisfaction with the pleasures to which court life had introduced him. All past vanities he seriously endeavored to put behind him in his tiny hermitage amid the hills of the province of Kiso. Alas, even here the world intruded. A fashionable hunting-party one day broke in upon his seclusion and, in despair of finding peace, he went back to his native Yoshida. Here he occupied himself with writing poetry and in study. Possibly, since "*cucullus non monachum facit*," Kenkō had already discovered that the world which he had renounced was still too much with him, and that the great enemies of life did not pass by his hermitage. "Into the still recesses of the moun-

tains," he has written, "shall not the enemy Change come warring?" The mention in the chronicles of two or three love affairs assigned to this period need not necessarily conflict with the impression given in the Notes of his being a woman-hater. May it not have been out of an experience as bitter-sweet as that which drew the Sonnets out of Shakespeare's heart (if we may allow that with this key the poet did unlock his heart) that Kenkō wrote the words which may as easily be the self-reproach of a conscience-stricken sinner as the conviction of a misogynist?:

"One would think that the character of this Woman, before whom people are so ashamed, was a very fine thing indeed, yet a woman's disposition is always crooked. The trait of Selfishness is strong. Greed is powerful. They do not know the reason of things and their hearts are quickly inclined to error. Their speech is clever. . . . . Deep in deceit and lies, one would think them superior to men in cunning. Yet they do not see that they are found out in the end. Dishonest and yet unskillful—this is Woman. One must be infatuated indeed to wish to please her, and to gain her approval."

Surely again it was out of the knowledge of a woman's power over his own frail heart that he expressed his thought:

"It is said that with a rope in which are twisted strands of a woman's hair the mighty elephant may be bound, and that the deer in autumn will not fail to gather to the call of a pipe carved from the clogs a woman wears."

What again are we to think of the following picture, as vivid and as human as that which Browning has given us in "Confessions"?—

"Against the north side of the house, where the still unmelted snow had frozen hard, a carriage was drawn up, and the hoar-frost glittered on its shafts. The day-break moon shone clear, though there were dark corners; and yonder on the gallery of the unfrequented Great Hall one who did not look a common man was seated with a woman on the rail. They were engaged in talk, which, whatever it may have been about, seemed as if it would never end. She appeared to be of excellent carriage and figure, and the way in which there came a sudden waft of vague perfume was very pleasing. Delightful, too, to watch their gestures and to catch now and again fragments of their talk."

Had not Kaneyoshi reflected in his hermitage:

*"How sad and bad and mad it was—*
*But then how it was sweet!"*

Of course it could not but be that the sage's musings were influenced by those ideals of asceticism and worldly renouncement which had been nourished by certain dominant schools of Buddhism. Kenkō quotes with approval the words of more than one of Japan's illustrious ones in favor of childlessness, and repeats the story that Shōtoku Taishi, "When he caused his own tomb to be built, cut off and stopped up the paths thereto, because he meant to leave no offspring." Nevertheless, I cannot believe that he, who was so human in so many other ways, was very far from tears when he wrote these words:

"A certain wild barbarian of fearful appearance, meeting a neighbor, said, 'Have you any children?' 'Not one,' he replied. 'Then you cannot know the Pity of Things, and all your doings must be with an unfeeling heart.' This was a terrible saying, but it must be so, as he said, that by children men come to feel the Pity of Things."

One might linger long on the story of Kaneyoshi's life, but space forbids. We see him

by glimpses in the chronicles (upon which, however, too much reliance must not be placed). Sometimes he is seen tramping on a pilgrimage to such and such a shrine; sometimes we behold him preaching to admiring crowds whom he hospitably entertains with rice-gruel as well as with sermons; anon we find him alternating his public work with periods of meditation in his beloved hermitage. It is said that his death occurred in 1350 and the story is told of the affectionate interest taken in his last illness by the Emperor Suko. Food and medicine were sent from the royal palace. The dying sage declined the medicine and distributed the food to the poor.

Among the sayings recorded in the *Tsuredzure Gusa* is the following: "The hermit lives so that he wants for nothing by having nothing." It is a characteristically sincere utterance, for the whole poor inventory of Kenkō's possessions found after his death is thus given: "An old copy of the Hokkekyō, some writings of Lao-tsz, the *Suma* and *Akashi* volumes of the Genji Monogatari, a copy of the *Maboroshi* volume in the handwriting of Tona, twelve bundles of scrap-paper, two suits of black vestments, his bedding and some pots and dishes."

Something else, however, remained of enduring value. Pasted up on the walls of the hermitages at Iga and Yoshida were found a number of poems and, on the backs of old scrolls of prayers, were scribbled the Notes which have now been given to the English-speaking world and which from the opening words have been entitled *Tsuredzure Gusa.*

It is well known that only a faint idea of the beauty of Japanese literature can be suggested in a translation, and of this beauty still less can be conveyed in such a sketch as this. However, it is worth while hoping that some of the fragrance of the rose may cling to the earthen vessel which has held the rose. In this case, the Japanese habit of "following the pen" has proved a happy one, since the mind which guided the pen seems to have overflowed with material accumulated in a lifetime of serious reflection and of observation at once shrewd and kindly.

It is, however, not easy to decide what features of these notes are most deserving of stress in a brief paper such as the present. There is, as I have already said, so much else beside the hermit's musings upon the great problems of births and deaths.

There is, for instance, a remarkable interest in the *Tsuredzure Gusa* on account of the light let in upon the old social order of Japan. We see, over against the growing luxury, something of the old simplicity which was nowhere more conspicuous than at the Court. One is reminded by the mention of the Black Door in the Emperor's palace of the days when Komatsu, prior to his accession, cooked his own food and performed other menial tasks. "It is called the Black Door because it was blackened by smoke from the kindling wood." We are brought very realistically into contact with those old swash-buckling priests who form such a singular phenomenon in Japanese Buddhism. Here is a picture hardly to be surpassed anywhere for vigor and for vividness:

"At a place called Shukugahara a large number of *boroboro* (bonzes) were assembled, reciting the prayer to Amida, when there entered from without a *boroboro* who said, 'Is there among you a priest named Irooshi, sirs?' The reply came forth from their midst, 'Irooshi is here. Who is it that speaks'? 'I am called Shirabonji. My master so-and-so was, I have heard, killed in the Eastern provinces by a *boro* named Irooshi. I wish to have the honor of meeting that gentleman and

avenging my master's death. That is why I ask.' Irooshi replied, 'Nobly asked, sir! I did do such a thing. But an encounter here would pollute this place of devotion. Let us meet in the river-bed in front therefore.' 'I am humbly grateful.' 'Pray let not the company present assist either party. If too many should get into trouble, it would hinder the performance of the service of Buddha.' Having thus arranged matters, the two went out to the river-bed, where they pierced one another to their heart's content, and died together."

What a flood of light, too, is shed upon the growing complexity of life in Japan from the following simple anecdote:

"A certain man decided to make his son a priest and said to him, 'You must study and learn the principles of the Faith and by preaching and so on make this your means of livelihood.' The son did as he was told. First of all, in order to become a preacher, he learned to ride a horse. This was because he thought it would be regrettable for a priest, who owned neither palanquin nor carriage, when he should be invited to take a service, and a horse sent to fetch him, to fall off because he had a loose seat. Then, because he might be pressed

to take wine and food after some sacred rites, and his host would think him dull if he were utterly without accomplishments, he learned to play the popular ditties called *haya-uta*. Having at length begun to be proficient in these two arts, he felt anxious to do better still, and while he was devoting himself thereto, he grew to old age without having had time to learn to expound the Scriptures." The story does not lack application to our own time.

Such illustrations might be multiplied *ad libitum*. Kenkō was an adept in appreciating and understanding the customs of his time, and our confidence is not diminished from the fact that, when he does not know the origin of some particular fashion, he says so frankly.

There is, in the next place, that feeling for Nature which is characteristic of a race which has produced so many poet-painters. One hardly knows what to choose among so many charming and striking vignettes. Here are two or three pictures selected almost at random:

"Here the autumn moor, in wanton, luxuriant growth, is flooded with the heavy fall of dew; insects sing noisily; and the water in the pipes flows with a soothing sound. The clouds seem to

gather and disperse more rapidly than in the sky of the Capital, the moon to wear a more variable complexion."

"In the sixth month the white evening-glory and the smoke of the *kayaribi* rising from some lowly cottage, make a touching sight. An imposing ceremony, too, is the purification of the sixth month. The Feast of Tanabata is bright and gay. Now, as the nights grow cooler, the wild geese come crying, the leaves of the lespedeza start to redden, the rice of the first crop is reaped and dried."

"Rather than see the moon shining over a thousand leagues, it sinks deeper into the heart to watch it when at last it appears towards the dawn. It never moves one so much as when seen, pale green over the tops of the cedars on distant hills, in gaps between the trees, or behind the clustering clouds after showers of rain. When it shines bright on the leaves of oak and evergreen, and they look wet, the sight sinks deep into one's being, and one feels, 'Oh, for a friend with a heart,' and longs for the Capital."

To give more would be to shut out from the possibility of mention Kenkō's fine, ironical, and yet kindly humor. There is something truly

delightful in his story of the Buddhist Bishop, 'a mighty choleric man':

"Near his home in the temple grounds there was a large celtis tree, so that he was known as the Celtis-tree bishop. Disliking this, he had the tree cut down, but as the roots remained, people now called him the Tree-stump bishop. At last, highly incensed, he had the stump dug up and thrown away, leaving a large hole behind. Whereat they now named him the Hole-in-the-ground bishop." Not less deserving of quotation is the story of the priest who was so fond of potatoes that "even at his sermons he would keep at his knees a large bowl piled high with them, which he would eat as he expounded the scriptures," or that of a certain man who held that the radish was the cure for all human ills and ate two every morning of his life. One day, hard pressed in battle, two strange warriors came to his aid and gained a great victory for him. When he enquired who the strangers were, they replied, "We are the radishes you have trusted and eaten for so many years." Then there is the story of the man who believed himself pursued by a ghostly monster called a *nekomata*, but who was really being welcomed home by his own dog—a story reminding us of the Fakenham

Ghost of our childhood. There is also the story of the inexperienced ghost which made such a failure of its attempt to terrorize—and many another. Not least humorous are the quaint notes on disagreeable things, such as too many pens in an inkstand, too many children in a house, too many vows in a prayer, or the reference to people who are bad to have as friends, such as "Strong people who are never ill."

Yet over all this gentle humor and the poetic appreciation of Nature rests the cloud of Buddhist dogmatism, the sad faith in *Maya* or illusion, the feeling that

> *"—like the baseless fabric of this vision,*
> *The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous*
> *palaces,*
> *The solemn temples, the great globe itself,*
> *Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve;*
> *And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,*
> *Leave not a rack behind."*

Such a philosophy he accepted with the fortitude with which the Orient has always confronted fate, but Kenkō did not pretend to conceal his genuine human sadness. To him who so loved life the sight of life's sorrows and tragedies came to him

as the revelation of age and sickness and death came to Prince Siddhartha. George Eliot, in *Adam Bede*, from the wayside crucifix among the apple-blossoms, where a young girl is seen seeking to assuage her grief, draws the necessity of a God who suffers. Kenkō was unable to see more than evidence of the incurable malady of life with its *Trishna* and its *Karma*. And this made him sad.

"The pools and shallows of the river Asuka! This is an inconstant life. Time passes, things vanish. Joy and grief go and come. What once was a gay and crowded spot becomes a deserted moor: or, if the dwelling rests unchanged, yet those within are not the same. 'The peach and the pear-tree cannot speak. With whom then shall I talk of by-gone days.' . . . . It is the old lament —that the white thread must be dyed and the ways part at the cross-roads."

How quickly it all passes! After watching the endless stream of people attending the Kamo festival, he writes:

"When night falls, whither have gone the carriages that stood in rows, and the close ranks of people? They soon become scarce, the noise of carriages dies down, blinds and mats are taken away. The scene grows to loneliness before one's

eyes, saddening indeed as one feels that this is the way of the world."

In the whole phantasmagoria of life, too, how few lives seem to mean anything. As Matthew Arnold sorrowfully confesses that "most men eddy about" so that no one asks

> *"Who or what they have been,*
> *More than he asks what waves,*
> *In the moonlit solitudes mild*
> *Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,*
> *Foamed for a moment, and gone."*

so Kenkō sings his dirge over the futility of living:

"Gathered together like ants, hastening East and West, hurrying North and South; some lofty, some base; some young, some old; some going abroad, some returning home; lying down to sleep at night, rising in the morning;—what is the business they are about? They never cease in their greed for life, in their pursuit of gain. What do they expect from this nourishment of the body? Only old age and death are certain. They come apace and are on us quicker than thought. What pleasure can there be awaiting them? Those who have wandered from the Way do not fear them, because, sunk in greed for name and profit, they

reck not of the journey they so soon must make. Fools think of them with sorrow, because they reflect on their own Impermanence and do not know the Reason of Change."

If such be the case, may not men get to think that all work, even the work of character, is like making a Buddha of snow on a spring day and fashioning for the image ornaments of gold and silver and jewels? Even while it lasts there is no freedom from pain, and we can imagine with what a sigh Kenkō adds to the description of a certain Bishop's disease the words: "To think that there are such sicknesses in the world!"

Yet, although the past may be unsubstantial, and this life itself "such stuff as dreams are made of," the sage of Yoshida cannot help being, with the great western poet, "glad for what was." He too, Buddhist as he is, can write of the joy of existence. Old things are dear to him, not merely because they are old, but because they have been, and *are*, his. He clings to the memory of his father's laughter when he, a little boy, was overwhelming him with questions. He cannot bear to see the withered hollyhocks thrown away when they have served their purpose in the decorations

for a feast. He believes that it is worth while going to see, not only the young boughs just about to flower, but also the gardens strewn with withered blossoms. "Men are wont," he says, "to regret that the moon has waned or that the blossoms have fallen, and this must be so; but they must be perverse indeed who will say, This branch, that bough is withered, now there is nought to see."

The future, too, is dear. The blossoms not yet come are his as well as those which are gone. He can conceive of Love not only as "thinking fondly of the past," but also as "spending the long night sleepless, yearning for distant skies." Only a person of poor understanding, he says, will have things in complete sets. It is incompleteness which is desirable. "To leave a thing unfinished gives interest, and makes for lengthened life. They say that even in building the palace an unfinished place is always left." "In all things where there is no room for advance decay is at hand." This, which he calls "the regret of the mounting dragon," what is it but an anticipation of Browning's "Old Pictures in Florence"?

*"Today's brief passion limits their range;*
*It seethes with the morrow for us and more.*
*They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:*
*We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.*
*The Artificer's hand is not arrested*
*With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:*
*They stand for our copy, and once invested*
*With all they can teach we shall see them abolished."*

Moreover, the present is precious, too. "Why do not men daily take pleasure in the joy of living?" A man about to sell an ox on the morrow was grieved, he tells us, because the ox died in the night. Why grieve? he asks. "It happened that the ox died. It happened that its owner lived. One day of life is weighter than ten thousand pieces of gold. The price of an ox is lighter than a feather."

With a heart beating thus in tune with Nature Kenkō, even with the problems of the Universe upon his mind, could not be all unhappy. Nor could his teachings, if they were in accord with the Notes he left behind him, have been without

their influence on the peasantry of Japan. Sometimes in the things he said we seem to catch an echo of the teachings of One Who "spake as never man spake." Do not the following words, for instance, at once recall one of the best known parables of Jesus?—"An evil-doer never walks just as he pleases into a house that is occupied. But into an empty house wayfarers enter at will, and foxes, owls, and such-like things there take up their abode, as if the place belonged to them, because there is no human presence to withhold them; and even such strange shapes as goblins and so on appear. If the heart has a master, the heart will not be invaded by innumerable things."

But we must say farewell for the present, a friendly farewell, I trust, to Yoshida no Kaneyoshi. We might write for his epitaph the words which he himself quotes from a poem of Yoshimidzu:

"Here lies the gentle Ariwara, who of old did love the moon and to gaze upon the flowers."

But we feel sure that the recording angel would add something more, writing him down "as one who loved his fellow men."

Let me close this sketch with some words of his own which perhaps better than any others may

describe the spirit and the manner of his passing hence:

"When you hear folks talking of the splendid way in which a man has met his end, you would think that they would feel admiration if only it were said that it was peaceful and undisturbed, but foolish people add talk of strange and doubtful appearances, and praise his words and behavior according to their own likings—which, one feels, is contrary to what he himself would have wished in life. This great occasion is one which even incarnated saints cannot determine, and scholars of wide learning cannot calculate. If one's own heart is not at fault, it matters not what others see and hear."

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